1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

PREFACE

122 THE material presented in this book was collected under the auspices of the Committee for Research on Problems of Sex, National Research Council, Washington, D.C. Their generous financial assistance afforded me an opportunity of studying a primitive people, for which I shall always be grateful. My programme was planned under the guidance of Dr. Clark Wissler, whose sponsorship I acknowledge with warmest thanks.

●121 In course of preparation my report has far outgrown the limits within which it was originally designed. If I have exceeded my mandate by including material not directly concerned with problems of sex, I have been encouraged to do so by the terms of a memorandum drawn up by the Committee, wherein it is stated that the field to be covered 'involves the whole ethnic setting, as well as biological, psychological, and social implications'. My own experience as a field-worker has impressed upon me the importance of the 'ethnic setting', which I take to mean the entire physical and cultural background. To give some account of this is the purpose of the second half of the book. I have reserved for publication in separate articles some technical data, including a series of physical measurements and observations, vital records, and a quantity of linguistic material, vocabularies, descriptive texts, and folk-stories.

600 A study of this kind depends so much upon the co-operation of other people that adequate acknowledgement is impossible. I am cognizant of indebtedness to many whose names are not mentioned, and most of all to my Melanesian friends on both sides of Buka Passage, who made my stay among them so pleasant.

The University of Oxford having generously granted me leave of absence from my duties as Demonstrator, I was able to spend a year in the field, from September 29, 1929, to October 8, 1930.

Every field-worker is at times dependent upon the good offices of those in authority over the sphere of his investigations. My thanks are due to Brigadier-General Evan Wisdom, C.M.G., Administrator of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, and to his staff, among whom I should like to mention especially Major McAdam, District Officer for Buka and Bougainville, and

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there still remain traces of the hostility that formerly prevailed. 101
There would appear to be some affinity, both in language and in 648
culture, between these two groups, but the slight amount of contact I had with the Hahon people was insufficient to enable me to classify them exactly. The Kunua people, inhabiting the north-central highlands and a portion of the coast about twenty miles south of its north-western corner, differ so much, both in customs and in language, from the people among whom I lived, that even a short visit was enough to indicate that they should probably be considered as a separate cultural entity. The coast folk are still very much afraid of the Kunua people, though there is no longer open warfare between them. They meet but rarely, chiefly on ceremonial occasions, such as those connected with the adolescent boys. These meetings are always characterized by a noticeable feeling of tension.

This book is primarily concerned with the people of the north 121●
coast of Bougainville, particularly its western half. With certain exceptions, discussed in their appropriate context, most of the information here given also holds good of the people of Buka, except in so far as changes have been introduced there by contact with whites. Since there are local differences, not due to white influence, I have been careful to give, in all cases, the exact locality from which each piece of information was obtained. Data concerning the provenance of which nothing is said, were collected at Kurtatchi from inhabitants of that village.

The culture of these people is disappearing with increasing [177]
rapidity, and their ideas on every subject are being changed day by day through contact with those of our own civilization. It therefore seemed imperative to make my investigation cover as much of their lives as possible. Though the information I have gathered is necessarily affected by the limitations imposed both by time and by my personal predilections and training, I have tried to put on record the most outstanding features of a *modus vivendi* which will, for better or for worse, in a very short time have been altered beyond recognition or recall.

[p. xxiv is blank]

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126 English translation between the lines of dialect, and adding notes in explanation of anything that was obscure. I thus have a large collection of texts in the dialect spoken at Kurtatchi, which proved of the greatest service to me in studying the language for practical use in the field, and could, if required, be utilised for comparative purposes. I [197] am not concerned with linguistic problems in the present paper, but I may perhaps mention that while the vocabulary of the Kurtatchi dialect differs widely from that of Petats, there are certain similarities of construction, both being of Melanesian stock. Unfortunately, every small group of villages has a dialect of its own, so that whenever I worked outside the immediate vicinity of my own village I was obliged to have recourse to Pidgin English again.

128 I have endeavoured to make the translation as literal as 198 possible, even to the point of crudeness, whether I have translated from the native dialect or from Pidgin English. Perhaps it is worth while to point out that Pidgin English, as used in that portion of the South Sea Islands with which I am acquainted, makes frequent use of constructions based on those of native speech, and is capable, within certain limitations, of representing the original with reasonable accuracy both as to form and spirit. It is therefore a not altogether inefficient medium in which to work. The style of the stories differs somewhat with different narrators, some joining their sentences more freely than others, and some showing great fondness for the repetition of long or short passages, a device common to tellers of folk-tales among all peoples.

● 121 There can be no question that the collecting of such stories is a very valuable tool in the hands of the field worker. Apart from the interest shown by the natives in the telling of them, and their value as linguistic material, the subject matter often suggested to me lines of enquiry which, when followed up, either at the conclusion of the story or at a more convenient season, as circumstances

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directed, many times brought to light beliefs and customs of which I might otherwise have remained in ignorance. Experience convinces me, furthermore, of the truth of the contention put forward by Dr. Haddon in his introduction to the stories collected by him in Torres Straits,[2] that such tales may be regarded as trustworthy documents, and may be "drawn upon as evidence for the occurrence of certain customs and beliefs." "No one," he says, "who has had experience in this class of evidence will deny scientific value to most of the incidents of these tales because of the miraculous that is interwoven with them." His comment upon the Torres Straits stories is equally applicable to those of Buka and Bougainville. As Malinowski has demonstrated, such stories richly repay analysis from the psychological standpoint also. In the present paper, however, I propose to confine myself to a presentation of my material.

As to the age of these stories, I can offer no conjecture. The great majority belong to the category called by the natives "*wasisio wa kana*", "story belong before", and doubtless stretch far back into a past in which there is no history and no outstanding incidents which would serve as landmarks, such as those provided by the voyages of the canoes amongst the Maori. Some of them tell of such ordinary incidents as might have happened to any native at any time, but from the manner of their telling, and from the fact that the same trivial happening will occur in stories told in different dialects collected in villages considerable distances apart, it would appear that these also are traditional. Some stories are brought within recent days by statements that the son or grandson of the man to whom the tale refers is still living at a certain village, or that So-and-so is a relative of his. A very few relate to the coming of the white man, or to objects introduced by him, but the vast majority deal only with native culture. For example,

[2] *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits* (Cambridge, 1904), vol. v., p. 10.

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TREATMENT OF THE SICK IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS[1]

114 121 DURING a residence of twelve months among the Melanesians of the north-western Solomon Islands, I had frequent opportunities of watching the natives treat one another for various forms of illness, and of collecting specimens of the plants and other substances which constitute their materia medica. The purpose of this paper is to place on record information given me by the natives themselves. No attempt will be made to deal with the subject from the standpoint of the medical practitioner, a task for which I am not qualified.

114 126 My information was obtained chiefly from the villages of Kurtatchi and Tabut, on the north coast of Bougainville. It was recorded verbatim in the local dialect, and a sample of each plant was collected at the same time. Unfortunately the incompleteness or imperfect preservation of many specimens rendered their identification impossible. Many of the prescriptions were given by more than one individual independently, or the technique might be the same while the plants differed. For some of the commoner ailments, people seemed to have their own favourite remedies, as do country folk in England. Some of these are secret and were imparted to me in private, others appear to be widely known.

754 757 It is sometimes said that primitive people regard every kind of sickness as the result of black magic. No one could be more conscious, or more terrified, of the power of black magic, which he calls "bad medicine" or "poison," than is the Solomon Islander, and he is not slow to ascribe his misfortunes to the machinations of some ill-disposed person who has "made poison."

[122]

[1] This paper is based on data collected between Sept. 1929 and Oct. 1930 on the islands of Buka and Bougainville, the most north-westerly of the Solomon group. I am indebted to the committee for research on problems of sex, National Research Council, Washington, D.C., for the opportunity of studying these primitive people, to the experts at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, for the identification of my botanical specimens, and to Prof. C. G. Seligman for useful comments.